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Merriam- Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary

ELEVENTH
EDITION



Merriam-Webster, Incorporated
Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A.



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RANDOM HOUSE WEBSTER'S UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY

Second Edition



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NEW YORK

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At-ro-pos (ə'trō pōs'), n. *Class. Myth.* the Fate who cuts the thread of life. [< Gk: lit, not turning, hence, inflexible. See A¹, -TROPE]

a-try (ə trī'), adj. *Naut.* lying to under a trysail in heavy weather; trying. [1605-15; A¹ + TRY]

ATS, Auxiliary Territorial Service (organized in 1941 for women serving in the British army; became part of army in 1948 as WRAC).

A.T.S. 1. American Temperance Society. 2. American Tract Society. 3. American Transport Service.

at-t₁. 1. attached. 2. attention. 3. attorney.

at-t₂-boy (ət'₂ bōi'), interj. *Informal.* (used as an enthusiastic expression of encouragement or approval to a boy, man, or male animal.) [1905-10; Amer.; alleged to be a reduced form of that's a boy or that's the boy]

at-tac-ca (ə tā'kē, ə tak'ē; It. ət tāk'kā), v. (used as an imperative) *Music.* begin immediately (directing a performer to go without pause to the next section). [< It; impv. of *attaccare* to ATTACK]

at-tac-₁ch (ət'āch'), v.t. 1. to fasten or affix; join; connect: *to attach a photograph to an application with a staple.* 2. to join in action or function; make part of: to attach oneself to a group. 3. Mil. to place on temporary duty with or in assistance to a military unit. 4. to include as a quality or condition of something: One proviso is attached to this legacy. 5. to assign or attribute: to attach significance to a gesture. 6. to bind by ties of affection or regard: You always attach yourself to people who end up hurting you. 7. Law. to take (persons or property) by legal authority. 8. Obs. to lay hold of; seize. —u.i. 9. to adhere; pertain; belong (usually fol. by to or upon): No blame attaches to him. [1300-50; ME *atachen*. < AF *atacher* to seize, OF *atacher* to fasten, alter. of *estacher* to fasten with or to a stake, equiv. to *estach(e)* (< Gmc *stakka STAKE) + -er inf. suffix] —at-tac-₁ch'a-ble, adj. —at-tac-₁ch'er, n.

—Syn. 1. subjoin, append, add, annex. —Ant. 1. detach.

at-tac-ché (ə tāsh', ət'ē- or, esp. Brit., a tash'ē), —n. 1. a diplomatic official attached to an embassy or legation, esp. in a technical capacity; a commercial attaché; a cultural attaché. 2. a military officer who is assigned to a diplomatic post in a foreign country in order to gather military information: an air attaché; an army attaché; a naval attaché. 3. Also, at-tac'-che. See attaché case. [1825-35; < F lit., attached, ptp. of *attachier* to ATTACH]

attaché case, a flat, usually rigid, rectangular briefcase for carrying business papers, documents, or the like. Also called dispatch case. [1900-05]

at-tac-₂ched (ət'āch'), adj. 1. joined; connected; bound. 2. having a wall in common with another building (opposed to detached): an attached house. 3. Zool. permanently fixed to the substratum; sessile. [1645-55; ATTACH + -ED']

at-tac-₃hment (ət'āch'mēnt), n. 1. an act of attaching or the state of being attached. 2. a feeling that binds one to a person, thing, cause, ideal, or the like; devotion; regard: *a fond attachment to his cousin; a profound attachment to the cause of peace.* 3. something that attaches; a fastening or tie: the attachments of a harness; the attachments of a pair of skis. 4. an additional or supplementary device: attachments for an electric drill. 5. Law. seizure of property or person by legal authority, esp. seizure of a defendant's property to prevent its dissipation before trial or to acquire jurisdiction over it. 6. something attached, as a document added to a letter. [1400-50; late ME *attachement* seizure < AF. See AT-TACH, -MENT]

—Syn. 2. love, devotedness. 3. junction, connection. 4. See addition.

at-tac-k (ət'āk'), v.t. 1. to set upon in a forceful, violent, hostile, or aggressive way, with or without a weapon; begin fighting with: He attacked him with his bare hands. 2. to begin hostilities against; start an offensive against: to attack the enemy. 3. to blame or abuse violently or bitterly. 4. to direct unfavorable criticism against; criticize severely; argue with strongly: He attacked his opponent's statement. 5. to try to destroy, esp. with verbal abuse: to attack the mayor's reputation. 6. to set about (a task) or go to work on (a thing) vigorously: to attack housecleaning; to attack the hamburgers hungrily. 7. (of disease, destructive agencies, etc.) to begin to affect. —u.i. 8. to make an attack; begin hostilities. —n. 9. the act of attacking; onslaught; assault. 10. a military offensive against an enemy or enemy position. 11. Pathol. seizure by disease or illness; an attack of indigestion. 12. the beginning or initiating of any action; onset. 13. an aggressive move in a performance or contest. 14. the approach or manner of approach in beginning a musical phrase. [1590-1600; earlier *atta(c)que* < MF *attacquer* < It *attaccare* to attack, ATTACH] —at-tac-₁ch'a-ble, adj. —at-tac-₁ch'er, n.

—Syn. 1. storm, charge. ATTACK, ASSAULT, ASSAULT, MOLST all mean to set upon someone forcibly, with hostile or violent intent. ATTACK is the most general word and applies to a beginning of hostilities, esp. those definitely planned: to attack from ambush. ASSAULT implies vehemence, sudden, and sometimes repeated attack; to assail with weapons or with gossip. ASSAULT almost always implies bodily violence; to assault with intent to kill. To MOLST is to harass, to threaten, or to assault: He was safe, and where no one could molest him. 4. censure; impugn, oppugn, abuse. 9. onset, encounter. —Ant. 1. defend. 9. defense.

at-tac-k dog', a dog trained to attack on command, as for protection or to aid in the apprehension of criminals. [1865-70]

at-tac-tor girl (ət'āk' gūrl'), interj. *Informal.* (used as an enthusiastic expression of encouragement or approval to a girl, woman, or female animal.) [1905-10; see ATTABOY, GIRL]

at-tain (ətān'), v.t. 1. to reach, achieve, or accomplish; gain; obtain: to attain one's goals. 2. to come to or arrive at, esp. after some labor or toil; reach: to at-

tain the age of 96; to attain the mountain peak. —u.i. 3. to arrive at or succeed in reaching or obtaining something (usually fol. by to or unto); to attain to knowledge. 4. to reach in the course of development or growth: These trees attain to remarkable height. [1300-50; ME *ateig(n)e* < AF, OF *atteign-* (s. of *atteindre*) < VL *at-tangere (for *l* *attangere*), equiv. to L *at-* + *tangere* to touch] —at-tain'er, n.

—Syn. 1. secure. See gain¹. —Ant. 1. 2. miss.

at-tain-a-ble (ətān'ə bəl), adj. capable of being attained. [1840-50; ATTAIN + -ABLE] —at-tain'a-bil'i-ty, at-tain'a-bles-ness, n.

at-tain-der (tān'dér), n. 1. the legal consequence of judgment of death or outlawry for treason or felony, involving the loss of all civil rights. 2. Obs. disonor. [1425-75; late ME, n. use of AF *attaindre* to convict, OF *attaindre* to convict, ATTAIN]

at-tain-ment (ətān'mēnt), n. 1. an act of attaining. 2. something attained; a personal acquirement; achievement. [1350-1400; ME *attainment*. See ATTAIN, -MENT]

—Syn. 2. accomplishment.

at-taint (tānt'), v.t. 1. Law. to condemn by a sentence or a bill or act of attainder. 2. to disgrace. 3. Archaic. to accuse. 4. Obs. to prove the guilt of. —n. 5. Obs. a stain; disgrace; taint. [1250-1300; ME *atainte*, deriv. of *ataynt* convicted < AF, OF, ptp. of *attaindre* to convict, ATTAIN]

at-tain-ture (ətān'chör), n. Obs. 1. attainder. 2. impatination. [1530-40; ATTAIN + -URE, modeled on ML *attingura* < L *attentio-* (s. of *attentio*). See ATTENT, -ION] —at-tain-tion-al, adj.

at-tain-tion-disorder, a developmental disorder of children characterized by inattention, impulsiveness, distractibility, and often hyperactivity. [1980-85]

at-tain-tion-getting (ətān'shōn get'ing), adj. conspicuously drawing attention to something or someone: an attention-getting device; attention-getting behavior.

at-tain-tion line', a line of text after the address on a piece of correspondence, directing it to a particular person or department. [1920-25]

at-tain-tion span', the interval during which an individual can concentrate, as on a single object, idea, or activity. [1930-35]

at-tain-tive (ətēn'tiv), adj. 1. characterized by or giving attention; observant, on attentive audience. 2. thoughtful of others; considerate; polite; courteous: an attentive host. [1375-1425; late ME (Scots) < MF; see ATTENT, -IVE] —at-tain-tive-ly, adv. —at-tain-tive-ness, n.

—Syn. 1. heedful, mindful, aware, alert, awake, watchful. —Ant. 1. indifferent, apathetic, unconcerned.

at-tén-uant (ətēn'yōō ent), n. a medicine or agent that thins the blood. [1595-1605; < L *attenuans* (s. of *attenuāns* thinning, prp. of *attenuāre*). See AT-, TENUIS, -ANT]

at-tén-u-ate (v. ətēn'yōō āt'; adj. a tēn'yōō it, -āt'), v., -at-ed, -at-ing, adj. —v.t. 1. to weaken or reduce in force, intensity, effect, quantity, or value; to attenuate. 2. to regulate or modify the temperature of. 3. to soothe; mollify; mitigate. 4. to accommodate; adapt (usually fol. by to). [1325-75; ME *attempren* < L *attempēre* to adjust (see AT-, TEMPER); r. ME *attempren* < MF *attemper* < L, as above]

at-tēm-pot (ətēm'pōt), v.t. 1. to make an effort at; try; undertake; seek; to attempt an impossible task; to attempt to walk six miles. 2. Archaic. to attack; move against in a hostile manner: to attempt a person's life. 3. Archaic to tempt. —n. 4. an effort made to accomplish something: He made an attempt to swim across the lake. 5. an attack or assault; an attempt upon the leader's life. [1350-1400; ME < AF *attemper* < L *attempēre* to test, tamper with. See AT-, TEMPER] —at-tēm-pot'a-bil'i-ty, n.

—at-tēm-pot'a-ble, adj. —at-tēm-pot'e-ry, n.

—Syn. 1. See try. 4. try, endeavor.

at-tend (ətēnd'), v.t. 1. to be present at; to attend a lecture; to attend church. 2. to go with as a concomitant or result; accompany: Fever may attend a cold. Success attended her hard work. 3. to take care of; minister to; devote one's services to: The nurse attended the patient daily. 4. to wait upon; accompany as a companion or servant: The retainers attended their lord. 5. to take charge of; watch over; look after; tend; guard; to attend one's health. 6. to listen to; give heed to. 7. Archaic. to wait for; expect. —u.i. 8. to take care or charge: to attend to a sick person. 9. to apply oneself: to attend to one's work. 10. to pay attention; listen or watch attentively; direct one's thought; pay heed: to attend to a speaker. 11. to be present: She is a member but does not attend regularly. 12. to be present and ready to give service; wait (usually fol. by on or upon); to attend upon the Queen. 13. to follow; be consequent (usually fol. by on or upon). 14. Obs. to wait. [1250-1300; ME *atenden* < AF *atendre* < L *attendere* to bend to, notice. See AT-, TEND'] —at-tend'er, n. —at-tend'ing-ly, adv.

—Syn. 4. See accompany.

at-tend-ance (ətēnd'əns), n. 1. the act of attending. 2. the persons or number of persons present: an attendance of more than 300 veterans. 3. dance attendance, to be obsequious in one's attentions or service; attend constantly: He was given a larger office and several attendants to dance attendance on him. [1325-75; ME < AF, MF. See ATTEND, -ANCE]

at-tend-ance of officer. See trustee officer.

at-tend-ant (ətēnd'ənt), n. 1. a person who attends another, as to perform a service. 2. Chiefly Brit. an usher or clerk. 3. a corollary or concomitant thing or quality. 4. a person who is present, as at a meeting.

—adj. 5. being present or in attendance; accompanying. 6. consequent; concomitant; associated; related: winter holidays and attendant parties; war and its attendant evils; poverty and its attendant hardships. [1350-1400; ME < MF, prp. of *attendre* to notice, await. See ATTEND, -ANT] —at-tend'ant-ly, adv.

—Syn. 1. escort, companion, mate; follower, retainer, servant. 3. accompaniment, consequence.

at-tend-dog', a dog trained to attack on command, as for protection or to aid in the apprehension of criminals. [1865-70]

at-tend-ee (ətēnd'ē), n. 1. a person who is present at a specific time or place: a conference with thousands of attendees. [1935-40; ATTEND + -EE]

at-tend-ing (ə ten'ding), adj. (of a physician) 1. having primary responsibility for a patient. 2. holding a staff position in an accredited hospital. [1580-90; AT-TEND + -ING²]

at-tent (ə ten'v), adj. Archaic. attentive; intent. [1275-1325; ME < L *attentus* attentive (ptp. of *attendere*), equiv. to *atten(d)* (see ATTEND) + -tus ptp. suffix] —at-tent'ly, adv.

at-tent-n (ə ten'shōn; interj. ə ten'shūn'), n. 1. the act or faculty of attending, esp. by directing the mind to an object. 2. Psychol. a concentration of the mind on a single object or thought, esp. one preferentially selected from a complex, with a view to limiting or clarifying receptivity by narrowing the range of stimuli. b. a state of consciousness characterized by such concentration. c. a capacity to maintain selective or sustained concentration. 3. observant care; consideration: Individual attention is given to each child. 4. civility or courtesy: attention to a guest. 5. notice or awareness: His deliberate cough caught the waiter's attention. 6. attentions, acts of courtesy or devotion indicating affection, as in courtship. 7. Mil. a. an erect position with eyes to the front, arms to the sides, and heels together (often used as a command). [1325-75; ME *atencion* < L *attention-* (s. of *attentio*). See ATTENT, -ION] —at-tention-al, adj.

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at-tēn-u-ation (ətēn'yōō əshān), n. 1. the act of attenuating or the state of being attenuated. 2. the process by which a virus, bacterium, etc., changes under laboratory conditions to become harmless or less virulent.

3. Physics. a decrease in a property, as energy, per unit area of a wave or a beam of particles, occurring as the distance from the source increases as a result of absorption, scattering, spreading in three dimensions, etc. [1885-95; < MF] < L *attenuātiō-* (s. of *attenuātiō*). See ATTENUATE, -ION]

at-tēn-u-ator (ətēn'yōō ətar), n. Electronics. a device for decreasing the amplitude of an electronic signal. [1920-25; ATTENUATE + -OR']

at-test (ətēst'), v.t. 1. to bear witness to; certify; declare to be correct, true, or genuine; declare the truth of, in words or writing, esp. affirm in an official capacity: to attest the truth of a statement. 2. to give proof or evidence of; manifest: His works attest his industry. 3. to put on oath. —v.i. 4. to testify or bear witness (often fol. by to); to attest to the reliability of an employee. —n. 5. Archaic. witness; testimony; attestation. [1590-1600; < AF attestere] < L *attestāri* to bear witness to, equiv. to at- AT- + *testāri* (test(is) a witness + -ā thematic vowel + -ri inf. suffix)] —at-test'a-ble, adj. —at-test'ant, n. —at-test'er, at-test'or, at-test-a-tor (ətēst'ə tor, ətēst'ər), n. —at-test'ive, adj.

at-test-a-tion (ətēstā'shōn), n. 1. an act of attesting. 2. an attesting declaration; testimony; evidence. [1640-50; < AF] < L *attestātiō-* (s. of *attestātiō*). See ATTEST, -ATION] —at-test-a-tive (ətēstātiv), adj.

at-test-ed form', a linguistic form actually in use or found in written records, in contrast to one that is hypothesized or reconstructed.

at gen., attorney general.

at-tic (ətik'), n. 1. the part of a building, esp. of a house, directly under a roof; garret. 2. a room or rooms in an attic. 3. a low story or decorative wall above an entablature or the main cornice of a building. 4. Anat. the upper part of the tympanic cavity of the ear. [1690-1700; spec. use of ATTIC]

At-tic (ətik'), adj. 1. of, pertaining to, or characteristic of Greece or of Athens. 2. (often l.c.) displaying simple elegance, incisive intelligence, and delicate wit. —n. 3. the dialect of ancient Attica that became the standard

CONCISE PRONUNCIATION KEY: act, c̄sپ, d̄r, p̄rt; set, équal; if, ice; ox, ūer, ūlder, ūlōk, b̄ōk; out; up, ūrge; child; sing; shoe; thin; that; sh; as in treasure; a -a as in alone, e -e as in system, i -i as in easily, o -o as in gallop, u -u as in circus; 'a as in fire (fīr), hour (oūr); l and n can serve as syllabic consonants as in cradle (krād'l), and button (but'n). See the full key inside the front cover.

The New Oxford Dictionary of English

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melancholy: from Latin *atra bilis* 'black bile' + translation of Greek *melankholia* 'melancholy', + suffix.

atraumatic ▶ adjective (of a medical or surgical procedure) causing minimal tissue injury.

atrazine /'atrəzɪn/ ▶ noun [mass noun] a synthetic compound derived from triazine, used as an agricultural herbicide.

- ORIGIN 1960s: blend of **AMINO** and **TRIAZINE**.

atréme ▶ adjective [predic.] poetic/literary trembling.

atresia /'tri:zɪə, -zɪə/ ▶ noun [mass noun] 1 Medicine absence or abnormal narrowing of an opening or passage in the body.

2 Physiology the degeneration of those ovarian follicles which do not ovulate during the menstrual cycle.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from *A-* 'without' + Greek *τρέσις* 'perforation' + *-ia*.

Atreus /'etris/ Greek Mythology the son of Pelops and father of Agamemnon and Menelaus. He quarrelled with his brother Thyestes and invited him to a banquet at which he served up the flesh of Thyestes' own children.

atrioventricular /,etri:vən'trɪkju:lər/ ▶ adjective Anatomy & Physiology relating to the atrial and ventricular chambers of the heart, or the connection or coordination between them.

atrium /'etru:m/ ▶ noun [pl. **atria** /'etru:ə/ or **atriums**] 1 Architecture an open-roofed entrance hall or central court in an ancient Roman house.

2 central hall or court in a modern building, typically rising through several stories and having a glazed roof. ■ the forecourt of a large church built on the basilican plan.

3 Anatomy each of the two upper cavities of the heart from which blood is passed to the ventricles. The right atrium receives deoxygenated blood from the veins of the body, the left atrium oxygenated blood from the pulmonary vein. Also called **AURICLE**.

- DERIVATIVES **atrial** adjective.

- ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from Latin.

atrocious ▶ adjective 1 horrifyingly wicked: atrocious cruelty.

■ of a very poor quality: extremely bad or unpleasant: he attempted an atrocious imitation of my English accent | atrocious weather.

- DERIVATIVES **atrociously** adverb, **atrociousness** noun.

- ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from Latin *atrox*, *atroc-* 'cruel' + *-ios*.

atrocity ▶ noun [pl. **-ies**] an extremely wicked or cruel act, typically one involving physical violence or injury: a textbook which detailed war atrocities | [mass noun] scenes of hardship and atrocity.

■ humorous a highly unpleasant or distasteful object: atrocities in cheap red nylon.

- ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (in the sense 'cruelty'): from French *atrocité* or Latin *atrocitas*, from *atrox*, *atroc-* 'cruel'.

atrophy /'atrfi/ ▶ verb (-ies, -ied) [no obj.] (of body tissue or an organ) waste away, especially as a result of the degeneration of cells, or become vestigial during evolution: the calf muscles will atrophy | [as adj. **atrophied**] in some beetles, the hindwings are atrophied. ■ figurative gradually decline in effectiveness or vigour due to underuse or neglect: the imagination can atrophy from lack of use.

► noun [mass noun] the condition or process of atrophying: gastric atrophy.

- DERIVATIVES **atrophic** adjective.

- ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from French *atrophier* (verb), *atrophie* (noun), from late Latin *atrophia*, from Greek, 'lack of food', from *a-* 'without' + *τρόφη* 'food'.

atropine /'atrpɪn, -in/ ▶ noun [mass noun] Chemistry a poisonous compound found in deadly nightshade and related plants. It is used in medicine as a muscle relaxant, e.g. in dilating the pupil of the eye.

■ An alkaloid; chem. formula: $C_8H_{13}NO_3$.

- ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: modern Latin *Atropa belladonna* 'deadly nightshade', from **ATROPOS** + **-INE**.

Atropos /'atrpɒs/ Greek Mythology one of the three Fates.

- ORIGIN Greek, literally 'inflexible'.

attaboy ▶ exclamation an informal expression of encouragement or admiration, typically to a man or boy.

ORIGIN early 20th cent.: probably representing a casual pronunciation of that's the boy.

attacca /'at:takə/ ▶ imperative verb a musical instruction used to indicate that the next section should follow without a pause.

- ORIGIN Italian, literally 'attack'.

attach ▶ verb [with obj.] fasten; join: he ensured the trailer was securely attached to the minibus.

■ fasten (a related document) to another: I attach a copy of the memo for your information. ■ include (a condition) as part of an agreement: the Commission can attach appropriate conditions to the operation of the agreement. ■ ascribe (value or importance) to something: he doesn't attach too much importance to fixed ideas. ■ [no obj.] **attach to** (of importance or value) be ascribed to: a good deal of prominence attaches to the central union federations. ■ **attach oneself to** join (someone or something) without being invited: they were all too ready to attach themselves to you for the whole day. ■ [usu. be attached] appoint (someone) for special or temporary duties: I was attached to another working group. ■ Law, archaic seize (a person or property) by legal authority: the Earl Marshal attached Gloucester for high treason.

- DERIVATIVES **attachable** adjective.

- ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'seize by legal authority'): from Old French *attachier* or *estachier* 'fasten, fix', based on an element of Germanic origin related to **STAKE**; compare with **ATTACK**.

attaché /'at:tʃeɪ/ ▶ noun 1 a person on the staff of an ambassador, typically one having a specialized area of responsibility: naval and air attachés. 2 N. Amer. short for **ATTACHÉ CASE**.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from French, literally 'attached', past participle of *attacher*.

attaché case ▶ noun a small, flat, rigid, rectangular case used for carrying documents.

attached ▶ adjective 1 joined or fastened to something: please complete the attached form. ■ [of a building or room] adjacent to and typically connected with another building or room: a ground-floor bedroom with a toilet attached.

2 full of affection or fondness: during the journey Mark became increasingly attached to Tara.

3 [predic.] **attached to** (of a person) appointed to (an organization or group) for special or temporary duties: he was attached to Military Intelligence.

■ [of an organization or body] affiliated to (another larger organization or body): a science policy agency attached to the Council of Ministers.

attachment ▶ noun 1 an extra part or extension that is or may be attached to something to perform a particular function: the processor comes complete with a blower attachment.

2 [mass noun] the condition of being attached to something or someone, in particular:

■ affection, fondness, or sympathy for someone or something: she felt a sentimental attachment to the place she grew up in. ■ [count noun] an affectionate relationship between two people: he formed an attachment with a young widow. ■ Brit. temporary secondment to an organization: the students are placed on attachment to schools for one day a week.

3 [mass noun] the action of attaching something: the case has a loop for attachment to your waist belt.

■ legal seizure of property.

- PHRASES **attachment of earnings** English Law payment of debts by direct deduction from the debtor's earnings, under a court order.

- ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'arrest for contempt of court'): from Old French *attachement*, from *atacher* 'fasten, fix' (see **ATTACH**).

attack ▶ verb [with obj.] take aggressive action against (a place or enemy forces) with weapons or armed force, typically in a battle or war: in February the Germans attacked Verdun | [no obj.] the terrorists did not attack again until March.

■ [of a person or animal] act against (someone or something) aggressively in an attempt to injure or kill: a doctor was attacked by two youths. ■ [of a disease, chemical, or insect] act harmfully on: HIV thought to attack certain cells in the brain. ■ criticize or oppose fiercely and publicly: he attacked the government's defence policy. ■ begin to deal with (a problem or task) in a determined and vigorous way: a plan of action to attack unemployment. ■ [no obj.] make an aggressive or forceful attempt to score a goal or point or gain or exploit an advantage in a game against an opposing team or player: Crystal Palace attacked swiftly down the left | [as adj. **attacking**] Leeds showed some good attacking play. ■ [with obj.] Chess move into or be in a position to capture (an opponent's piece or pawn).

► noun 1 an aggressive and violent act against a person or place: he was killed in an attack on a checkpoint | three classrooms were gutted in the arson attack.

■ [mass noun] destructive action by a disease, chemical, or insect: the tissue is open to attack by fungus. ■ a sudden short bout of an illness or stress: an attack of nausea | an asthma attack. ■ an instance of fierce public criticism or opposition: he launched a stinging attack on the Prime Minister. ■ a determined attempt to tackle a problem or task: an attack on inflation. ■ [mass noun] Music the manner of beginning to play or sing a passage. ■ [mass noun] forceful and decisive style in performing music or another art: the sheer attack of Hendrix's playing. ■ an aggressive attempt to score a goal, win points, or gain or exploit an advantage in a game. ■ the players in a team who are in the position of trying to score a goal or win points: Baxter was recalled to the attack. ■ Chess a threat to capture an opponent's piece or pawn.

- PHRASES **under attack** subject to aggressive, violent, or harmful action: the north-western suburbs came under attack in the latest fighting.

- ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from French *attaquer* (noun), *attaquer* (verb), from Italian *attacco* 'an attack', *attaccare* 'join battle', based on an element of Germanic origin (see **ATTACK**).

attacker ▶ noun a person or animal that attacks someone or something.

■ [in football and other games] a player whose task is to attack the other side's goal in the attempt to score, a forward.

attagirl ▶ exclamation an informal expression of encouragement or admiration to a woman or girl.

- ORIGIN 1920s: on the pattern of *attaboy*.

attain ▶ verb [with obj.] succeed in achieving (something that one desires and has worked for); clarify your objectives and ways of attaining them | he attained the rank of Brigadier | human beings can attain happiness.

■ reach (a specified age, size, or amount): dolphins can attain speeds in water which man cannot yet emulate.

- DERIVATIVES **attainability** noun, **attainable** adjective, **attainableness** noun.

- ORIGIN Middle English (in the senses 'bring to justice' and 'reach (a state)': from Old French *atteindre*, from Latin *attingere*, from *ad-* 'at, to' + *tangere* 'to touch'.

attainder /'etɪndər/ ▶ noun historical the forfeiture of land and civil rights suffered as a consequence of a sentence of death for treason or felony.

- PHRASES **act (or bill) of attainder** an item of legislation inflicting attainder without judicial process.

- ORIGIN late Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French, variant (used as a noun) of Old French *atteindre* in the sense 'convict, bring to justice' (see **ATTAIN**).

attainment ▶ noun [mass noun] the action or fact of achieving a goal towards which one has worked: the attainment of corporate aims.

■ [count noun] (often **attainments**) a thing achieved, especially a skill or educational achievement.

attaint ▶ verb [with obj.] 1 (usu. be attainted) historical subject to attainder.

2 affect or infect with disease or corruption.

- ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'touch, reach, attain'): from obsolete *attaint* (adjective), from Old French *ataint*, *attein*, past participle of *atteinre* 'bring to justice' (see **ATTAIN**).

Attalus /'atləs/ ▶ noun a member of a Hellenistic dynasty named after Attalus I (reigned 241–197 BC), which flourished in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.

► adjective of or relating to this dynasty.

attap /'atp/ (also **atap**) ▶ noun [mass noun] thatch made in SE Asia from palm fronds.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from Malay *atap* 'roof, thatch'.

attar /'atə/ (also **otto**) ▶ noun a fragrant essential oil, typically made from rose petals.

- ORIGIN late 17th cent.: via Persian from Arabic *ītr* 'perfume, essence'.

attempt ▶ verb [with obj.] make an effort to achieve or complete (something, typically a difficult task or action): she attempted a comeback in 1989 | [with infinitive] troops shot civilians who attempted to flee.

■ try to climb to the top of (a mountain): the expedition was the first to attempt Panch Chuli V. ■ archaic try to take (a life): he would not have attempted the life of a friend.

► noun an act of trying to achieve something, typically